Draft

LIVING WITH MMP: THE NEW ZEALAND EXPERIENCE[1]

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Introduction

In democracies, elections are the main legitimate and legal mechanism to change a government. As such, the winning and losing of elections determines whether a political party will be able to form government, secure political resources in order to implement its political agenda and programmes. Winning and losing an election can also determine the fate and careers of party members who are members of parliaments. In short, elections are high-stake games political elites play in democracies. But what determines the winners and losers in a democratic election? The answer to this is the electoral system and the electoral formula used to translate votes to seats.

Voluminous works on electoral systems and their consequences have consistently shown that different types of electoral systems leads to variation in party systems, the level of extremism in a political system, representation, accountability, and the need for coalition government or not (Lijphart 1994, Taagepera and Shugart 1990, Shugart and Carey 1992, Boix 1999). In what could be considered as having a 'law' like status in social science theory – Duverger's law states that proportional representation systems tend to lead to

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multiparty systems, while plurality and majoritarian electoral systems tend to lead to two-party systems. Indeed, the choice of electoral systems has implications to the type of party system but at the party level this implies that the success and failure of political parties becomes a direct function of the chosen electoral system. Boix (1999), then, suggested that political parties would work to change the electoral system in response to declining voter support and ensure their organisational dominance, if not survival.

Since the introduction of the mixed member proportional representation (MMP) system to New Zealand's general elections, New Zealand has had an increase in the number of parliamentary parties. And as predicted, with the increase in the effective number of parliamentary parties, since 1996 coalition governments have become the norm in New Zealand. The number of political parties in coalition government varies and the ways and methods that New Zealand mend together parties into a coalition can only be termed as 'creative.' The main impetus for adopting the MMP system was to increase the representation of under-represented voices in New Zealand's political system. This has indeed occurred in New Zealand with parties spanning the spectrum of left and right parties.

While the two largest parties – National and Labour – have always played a key role as the formateur party in each of the coalition governments since 1996, both parties have experienced more volatile voter support as new parties form to peel away their existing voter support. Furthermore, both political parties also needed to go through the messy process of coalition building as well as power sharing in the post-First Past the Post (FPP) world of New Zealand politics.

Between the two largest parties, the incentive to change and secure its organisational support is more evident in the National Party (the right of center party) more so than the Labour Party. Since MMP was introduced, Labour Party has formed three of the seven coalition governments. In a country where the perception of the median electorate is left of centre and where more political parties are arrayed from centre to the left side of the ideological continuum, right of centre parties faces real challenges to maintaining its support base and more importantly to translate that voter support into control of government. In the general election of 2005, for example, the competitiveness and closeness of the election saw Labour and National with a very small difference in seat count. By all accounts, both political parties can conceivably form the government pending the results of coalition negotiations. Yet, because there are more limited choice for centre-right political parties, National found it more difficult to stitch a credible coalition that would give it a majority coalition. In some ways, National's failure in 2005 general election to have credible coalition partners may have lead to the inclusion of the referendum on the electoral system as part of its 2008 general election campaign. Yet, since National's victory in the general election of 2008, National has creatively stitched together a workable coalition and with astute economic and political management has actually slowly moved New Zealand to the center-right.

The aim of this paper is simple – to provide a picture of New Zealand's experience 'living with MMP.' In the next section, I provide a background of the New Zealand electoral system. Following this discussion, I briefly examine some of the main issues that are raised by both proponents and opponents of the current electoral system. This will then be followed by going through some of

the issues raised and provide evidence and information in order for the reader to get a glimpse of New Zealand's MMP – its issues and challenges.

Background

Prior to the 1996 General Election, New Zealand elections have been conducted under the First Past the Post electoral rule. 1996 was the first general parliamentary election conducted under Mixed Member Proportional Representation system with voters casting two votes – one vote casting for a candidate running for a constituency district and another vote casting for a party. The constituency seats are apportioned through the first past the post formula. The party vote, however, determines the ultimate make-up of the parliament.

In 1993 a referendum on the electoral system in New Zealand was held alongside the general election and would lead to an adoption of the mixed-member proportional (MMP) electoral system. This occurred as a result of a report by the Royal Commission on the Electoral System released in December 1986. According to the Elections New Zealand website, this report recommended that New Zealand implement a change in electoral system to the German-style MMP system. This would change the New Zealand electoral system dramatically from the Westminster-style First Past the Post (FPP) system to a form of proportional representation (PR). As a consequence of this report, a non-binding "indicative" referendum was held in 1992 to gauge the public's feelings towards the current electoral system and potential change. The result was strongly in favour of removing FPP and implementing MMP over several other options, so the following year saw another referendum, this one binding, in which the public

was asked to choose between FPP and MMP. MMP won with only 54% against 46% for FPP, but it was enough to change New Zealand's electoral system.

MMP was first used in the general election of 1996 and has been used in the six following elections through 2014. Two votes are made during elections by the voters: one for a local MP in one's electorate and one party list vote. The electorate seats are won by plurality, much like an FPP system, while a PR system determines the party lists. A party must get at least five percent of the votes or at least one electorate seat to be represented in parliament. After the parties that have not made the five percent threshold or have not won an electorate seat are deleted, the next step consists of distributing the votes into seats according to the Sainte-Laguë allocation formula. Having calculated how many seats a party should receive according to the total number of party votes, the electorate seats won by that party are then taken off the calculation of seats to get how many list MPs will join the party in parliament. The Elections New Zealand website gives the example that if calculations dictate that the Labour party should receive 52 seats in parliament based on their party votes and that they also won 45 electorate seats, then there will be 7 Labour list MPs. In this sense, New Zealand still has proportional representation even though there are 70 electorate seats which are won by FPP out of total of 120 seats. This is equivalent to 58% of the seats in parliament still being won by a plurality system as opposed to PR. However, due to the Sainte-Laguë method where electorate seats are then included in the total seats a party should hold according to its party votes, New Zealand does in fact have a PR system.

Although New Zealand has now used MMP for seven elections and the public's votes are now much more proportionately represented in parliament,

there is clearly some disenchantment with the system. In fact, New Zealand has never had the follow-up referendum, which was meant to be held after the first term of MMP, to see how the public like MMP after seeing it in action until 2011.

Leading up to the 2011 referendum, some concerns and issues with the current system of MMP. Many of these issues are summed up on the website for *Vote For Change*, a group which was urging the public to consider new electoral options and to see the flaws in MMP. One of these issues is that MMP is relatively proportionately representative, but it also allows for parties with a very small percentage of the vote still to get into parliament via electorates despite not reaching the threshold of five percent. In contrast to this argument, the home page for *Vote For Change*'s website emphasises the fact that list MPs get into parliament despite being voted out by their electorate. These MPs are then not directly accountable to any voting constituencies but rather just serve the political party bosses, as they will be more concerned about their list ranking than thinking of their constituents.

Another argument from *Vote For Change* puts forward that the minor parties hold too much power in parliament. Although their number of seats may be representative of their support, they can hold the balance of power and consequently choose who will form a government. As a result, the major party in government may not be able to stick to its promises to the public due to post-election negotiations to form coalitions.

One may also argue that due to the much higher chance of coalitions forming in a PR system, the efficiency in parliament is severely compromised. With so many parties trying to voice their opinions over policies, pushing through legislation becomes a much slower and more complicated process,

greatly reducing the government's ability to implement its promises to the public and to do so efficiently. However, on the contrary, this may be considered a benefit of MMP by others. Some may see it as a much fairer system since legislation cannot get pushed through by a majority government that does not in fact hold a majority of votes, as in FPP, so the legislation may reflect more correctly the wishes of the public.

In a 2009 interview with ONE News,[2] political scientist Jonathan Boston argued that that he feels a referendum on New Zealand's electoral system is not necessary, as MMP provides effective government, parliament and parties and it is a more representative and fair system than before. Consequently he claims the current system is not "fundamentally flawed" and it is more important to consider ways of improving some of the aspects of MMP that may have caused concern.

Due to these concerns with MMP, the 2011 referendum asked the public for its thoughts on the electoral system of New Zealand. It occurred in two parts. The first part asked voters to vote to keep the MMP voting system or vote to change to another voting system. The second part asked which voting system the voter would choose were New Zealand to change from MMP. The options on offer are FPP, the Preferential Voting system (PV), the Single Transferrable Vote system (STV), and the Supplementary Member system (SM). The results of the referendum was 57 percent in support of keeping MMP.

The Electoral Commission began public consulation on recommending changes to the current MMP system on February 2012 and submitted a formal report to the Ministry of Justice by the end of October 2012. The most significant

[2] http://tvnz.co.nz/politics-news/no-need-ditch-mmp-says-expert-3085166

changes recommended by the commission is changing the eligibility of list seat allocation threshold from 5 percent to 4 percent as well as removing the one constituency seat rule. If implemented it would have serious implications to the number of micro-parties in Parliament. Parliament can decide on whether to enact any or all of the recommended changes. As of 2015, none of the recommended changes have been discussed in parliament.

In the next sections of this paper, let us to turn to some of the issues raised about MMP and assess how these 'issues' hold up against extant evidence.

Messy Coalitions and Lengthy Coalition Formation Time

One often heard complaint about MMP is that the election do not bring a 'clean' electoral result as first-past-the-post single member plurality electoral system. In other words, while the election can provide with the percentage of seats won by a party, it does not immediately deliver a 'government.' How long does it take then for a coalition government to be formed in New Zealand?

[Table 1 here]

Table 1 contains information on the length of time it took for the formateur party to form a coalition. Using the election date and the cabinet swearing in date as indicators of length of negotiations, we can observe that in the seven MMP elections in New Zealand thus far, coalition negotiations took between 11 days to 64 days to complete. It is important to observe here that besides the unusually long negotiation after the 1996 election, the other six elections hence have relatively short negotiation period.

The 1996 coalition negotiations deserved special mention not only because it is first coalition negotiation in the MMP-era but for its notoriously

long political haggling that may have left a bad impression of the new electoral system. Miller and Vowles (2009) note that expectations were high going into the 1996 elections but the resulting negotiations tested MMP. The election result left no clear winner leaving the populist New Zealand First as the 'kingmaker.' Against their pre-election pledge of no coalition with the center-right National Party, New Zealand First signed a voluminous post-electoral coalition agreement joined with National to form the first MMP-era coalition and gained eight out of 20 ministerial seats. By 1998, the relationship between National and NZ First was so fraught with problems it led to an internal revolt within National who replaced their leader Jim Bolger with Jenny Shipley (New Zealand's first woman Prime Minister). Shipley's dismissal of the NZ First leader, Winston Peters, from cabinet led to a collapse of the coalition government.

Yet, besides this relatively rough start to New Zealand's experience with MMP, the coalition negotiation time has been relatively short and the coalition governments formed have been relatively stable. Why the short coalition negotation time and a relatively stable coalition government, then? There are several plausible factors that can explain this. First, New Zealand parties tend to signal their coalition intentions early during the campaign period. Since the 1996 election, the two large parties – National and Labour – have signalled who they would approach as possible coalition partners after the election. In the case of Labour who led the government in 1999, 2002, and 2005 they have stayed with largely the same coalition partners. The 2005 general election was a bit of a surprised as the more center-right New Zealand First joined the coalition at the expense of Labour's traditional ally – the Greens. The negotiation was made more complex by the fact that the Labour-Progressive alliance needed a fourth

party besides the Greens to join the coalition to get majority. However, both eventual junior partners – New Zealand First and United Future – refused to sign up if the Greens are formally part of the coalition leading Labour leaders to dump the Greens.

A plausible second reason for the shortening of negotiation period is a very likely learning of the mechanism and dynamics of coalition negotiation. The first MMP election in 1996 is truly a new experience for New Zealand politicians who are used to be a clear cut single party majority cabinet in the decades prior. With the 1996 post-election wrangling living a 'bad taste' in the mouth of the voters, politicians may have learned quickly how to negotiate terms of coalition agreements. Indeed, New Zealand has created unique coalition 'institutions' and arrangements such as confidence and supply agreements or ministers outside of caucus in order to expedite the formation of the coalition government.

Thirdly, the party system has settled after the initial burst of political parties into New Zealand's parliament in 1996. As a result, voter alignments and party preferences have become relatively stable since then with National the main anchor party on the right and Labour the main anchor on the left, Since 2002, the Greens have become consistently the third largest party in parliament with New Zealand First settling in as a the fourth. Fluctuation within the party system are mainly at the micro-party level where parties such as United Future, Maori, and ACT are consistently losing voter support and are only able to maintain legislative representation due to their ability to retain their one constituency seat.

And lastly with regards coalition stability, this is helped by the fact that New Zealand has short election cycle – three years between elections. Since the

introduction of MMP, New Zealand cabinets have generally lasted most of the three year term.

Does the Tail Really Wag the Dog?

Another concern about the weakness of the MMP is that because small parties have a higher likelihood of getting into parliament, the chances of single-party majorities are very low. As a result, the impression is that large parties can be easily blackmailed by the smaller political parties. While it is difficult to gauge and test for disproportionality of party influence within the cabinet government, it is naive of us to assume and conclude that it does not occur.

Riker's minimum winning coalition theory reminds us that formateur parties will tend to form coalition governments with just bare majorities. Over time, this theory has been improved by scholars in order to improve its predictive power. Nevertheless, it is a fact that minority governments (Strom 1990; Lijphart 1990) and oversize coalitions (Luebbert 1986) do occur. As a preventive measure against potential 'blackmail,' oversize coalitions are one way that the formateur party can avoid be 'held hostage' by the defection or disloyalty of a junior coalition party. That is, the extra legislative seats or parties beyond the bare majority allows for the formateur to be able to play junior coalition partners against each other while having a better control of the legislative agenda. So what is New Zealand's experience since the first MMP election in 1996? Table 2 shows the coalition parties, the number of seats won by the formateur party, margin of the majority, and whether the coalition is considered an oversize coalition.

[Table 2 here]

As can be observed in Table 2, all governments since 1996 are coalition governments. The number of parties in each of the coalition governments do vary from two to five with the margin of the majority fluctuates from a bare one-seat majority to a high of 11. Interestingly, though, besides the 1996 National-led government and the 1999 Labour-led government, the five governments that have followed hence are all considered oversized coalitions. While more empirical evidence and tests are most definitely required, it is probably safe to infer from the data in Table 2 that the minor coalition partners have too much influence in cabinet. In fact, it is difficult for opponents of MMP to sustain the argument that the 'tail wags the dog' in New Zealand when the formateur parties have creatively found ways to at least soften the blackmail potential of the minor parties.

Too Many Small Parties?

One of the oft heard complaints about MMP in New Zealand is that there are just too many small political parties that can affect coalition negotiation. As mentioned in an earlier section, the first coalition negotiation of 1996 certainly was a rude awakening for the voters to the messy reality of coalition negotiation. How do voters actually view the number of parties in parliament? Table 3 shows how voters feel about the number of parties elected to parliament after the 2011 general elections.

[Table 3 here]

When asked what respondents think of the number of political parties in parliament after the 2011 election, 47 percent of respondents answered that there is too many parties with 38.5 percent saying it is 'just right' while 2 percent

think there not enough parties. It is clear that New Zealanders are still quite divided about how they perceived MMP and the consequent number of parties it creates.

A further examination of voters' preference for type of government and perception on number of parties is actually revealing as well. New Zealand Election Study asked respondents if they prefer single party governments or coalition governments. Cross-tabulating the results of Table 3 with goverment type preferences gives us the results presented in Table 4.

[Table 4 here]

As we can observe from the evidence presented about 69 percent of respondents who prefer single party governments answered that there are too many parties in parliament while 23 percent said 'just right.' For respondents who prefer coalition governments, 51 percent believe the number of parties are 'just right' while 37 percent said there are too many parties. From this evidence, one can most obviously note the seemingly counter-intuitive preferences of the 23 percent that preferred single party governments and the 37 percent of that preferred coalition governments. There seems to be some level of confusion that continues to linger on with regards to MMP.

From an objective perspective though how does New Zealand's number of parties stack up? Table 5 shows number of parliamentary parties and the effective number of parties in the New Zealand parliament. As can be observed, parliamentary parties have increased from 6 in 1996 to 8 in 2011 but the effective number of parties have actually declined from 3.76 in 1996 to 2.98 in 2011. The disjuncture in these two figures can be explained by the increase in the number of micro-parties in the New Zealand parliament (see Shugart and

Tan 2016 forthcoming). As a given some perspective, compared with Germany which has a relatively similar MMP system, since the 1990s German parliamentary parties are less than New Zealand's. However, the effective number of parliamentary parties in Germany are higher than New Zealand's fluctuating between 3.17 to 4.83 (Shugart and Tan 2016). Reconciling the figures on Table 3 and Table 5, we can infer that voters have keyed in on raw number of parties without accounting for the 'size' of the political parties.

Ideological Orientation of New Zealand

Did MMP result in extreme ideological orientation in New Zealand? One way to gauge this is to place political parties in an ideological continuum. Bryce Edwards conducted an expert survey of party placement on a left-right continuum allowing us to look at the ideological placement of political parties that have won seats in the New Zealand Parliament. Figure 1 shows the ideological placement of political parties in New Zealand.

[Figure 1 here]

As shown on Figure 1 above, the indicator for the ideological center is between Labour and UF (United Future). The Greens and the ACT party form the extreme ends of the New Zealand left-right dimension. Greens are pro-environment and have a largely social democratic agenda. The Greens are now New Zealand's third largest party by voter support and number of legislative seats held. ACT is a right liberatarian political party that is strongly pro-business and anti-tax. New Zealand's two largest political party – National and Labour – are in the center-right and center-left positions, respectively. In this figure, the Progressives are included since they were part of the Labour-led coalition from

1999 to 2008. After the 2008 elections, the Progressives were dissolved. It can also be gleaned from Figure 1 that there are numerous political parties that have won legislative seats. Of these political parties, New Zealand First is a populist party that can now claim to be New Zealand's fourth largest party by legislative seats. Maori Party is a ethnic based party that mainly competes in the Maori constituency seats. Together with United Future and ACT, they would now be considered amongst the so-called micro-parties in the New Zealand party landscape (Shugart and Tan 2016, forthcoming).

How extreme is the New Zealand party system? One simple method to examine this is to consider the distance between the two most extreme parties. In Figure 1, the most extreme right party is ACT with a score of 8.0 and the most extreme left party is the Greens with a score of 2.8 giving an ideological distance of 5.2. Comparing this MMP era ideological distance of 5.2 with the FPP era of 2.3 (National and Labour two party system), it is not a far-fetched to infer that the legislative party system has become more extreme.

The ideological distance of the two most extreme parliamentary parties give the impression that all parties are of equal legislative strength. To provide a more accurate picture of influence and strength, requires us to take account of the size of legislative representation. In order to do this, I aggregated the weighted Edwards' ideological score (on a 10-point scale) for each party with the percentage of seats that each party received in each election. For example, party experts rated Labour with an average ideological score of 4.7 so if they won 50 percent of the parliamentary seats then the weighted ideological score for Labour would be 4.7*0.50 = 2.35. Aggregating each of these ideological scores provide a glimpse of the ideological leaning of each New Zealand Parliament.

Note that the the ideological center of this 10-point scale would be 5.5. Table 6 shows the ideological leanings of the parliament.

[Table 6 here]

As we can observe from Table 6, even with the expected increase in number of parties that are further away from the ideological center, the weighted ideological leaning of the New Zealand Parliament is actually quite centrist (slightly center-right). For reference, I included the weighted ideological leaning of the last FPP election in 1993 of 5.86. In 1996, the ideological leaning was at 5.83 moving more towards the center at 5.59 with the Labour-led government in 1999. However, since the 1999 election the New Zealand Parliament has actually drifted rightward again with the 2014 general election consolidating the gains by the National Party commanding just one seat short of outright majority. Inferring from this evidence, then, it is difficult to conclude that the parliament has become more extreme in its ideological leaning with the adoption of MMP.

Thus far we have tackled some of the issues and concerns heard in New Zealand about MMP. Assessing these concerns against existing evidence, it seems to indicate that the issues and problems raised by MMP opponents in New Zealand are left wanting and unconvincing. But why is it the case that these 'concerns' continue to linger on causing MMP to always be under scrutiny and 'on-trial' so to speak? In the next section, I present some interesting data that may indicate there seem to be some contradictory preferences amongst NZ voters and it is likely that after all almost twenty years since MMP was adopted confusion about electoral system still persist.

Are We Still Confused?

New Zealanders have an inherent belief in fairness. In 1978 and 1981, National formed a single-party majority government with lesser votes that the Labour party did not sit well on fair-minded New Zealanders. The fear that in a pure single-member district, FPP Westminster system – as what New Zealand had – a party with minority vote rules as a majority with unbridled power has been etched in the minds of New Zealand serving as an impetus for the movement to get rid of FPP. As Miller and Vowles (2009) note, the burst of support for MMP was mainly because of its proportional feature, i.e., a party's share of the votes directly translates to its seat shares.

[Table 7 here]

The belief in a fair electoral system is supported by from the respondents' view on whether they agree or disagree with the statement: "A good electoral system should give the party with the most votes the most MPs." Table 7 is a breakdown of the percentage of respondents view on that statement. As the data in Table 7 shows, 77.6 percent of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement indicating a strong belief in what a fair electoral system should be. Interestingly, based on the New Zealand Election Study survey results, of those that voted for MMP in the 2011 referendum 81.9% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement above – a party with the most votes should get the most MPs – while of those that voted against MMP 90.3% also agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

The counter-intuitive result above seem to also be the case with voters response with regards to other aspects of the government formation and electoral system. So with this in mind, how do voters' preference for type of

government and proportionality translate to their referendum votes? Tables 8 show referendum votes with government type while Table 9 show referendum votes with proportionality preferences.

[Table 8 and Table 9 here]

Observing the data on Table 8, a large majority (69.8%) of respondents indicating a preference for single party governments voted against MMP. Similarly, for those who prefer a coalition government an equally large majority (63.1%) voted in favor of MMP. Interestingly (and quite baffling) is the large minority of respondents seemingly voting ticking the wrong choice for the referendum vote. Of those who prefer single party governments, 16% voted for MMP while 25% of those indicating a preference for coalition governments voted against MMP.

The same confusing result is shown on the respondents' preferences for proportionality and their referendum vote as shown in Table 9. In both instances, approximately 60% voted 'correctly' while 20% seem to have voted 'incorrectly.' That is, 20 percent of those that wanted single party governments voted in favor of MMP – a system that has led to coalition governments – and the same percentage that prefers coalitions voted against MMP.

These baffling results, despite the amount of voter education by the Electoral Commission, may actually indicate that MMP remains confusing to a significant percentage of the voting public. While more studies definitely need to be undertaken, we can infer that the confusion with regards to MMP and the electoral system may actually be contributing to the lingering concerns and doubts about MMP putting New Zealand's MMP being always 'on trial.'

Concluding Remarks

At the outset, I stated that the objective of this paper is to expose and share New Zealand's experience of MMP electoral system. In the course of this paper, I have given a background to NZ's dumping of the FPP in favor of MMP in 1996. Leading up to the much awaited and much delayed electoral system referendum in 2011, some issues and concerns were brought to the fore during the campaign period. These issues and concerns raised – such as the large number of parties, the concern unwieldy coaltions, and ideological extremism – were held against the backdrop of existing evidence. While, needless to say, the 'tests' are rough and preliminary, what the 'quick-and-dirty' tests that was conducted do provide some level of support to those who are proponents of the MMP in New Zealand. Yet, much remains to be done to educate the voting public about the electoral system for MMP to be accepted by a larger majority of New Zealand's voting public and stopped being constantly 'put on trial.'

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Table 1. Government Formation Time

Election date	Cabinet Swearing in date	Coalition Negotiation Time
12 October 1996	16 December 1996	64 days
27 November 1999	10 December 1999	13 days
27 July 2002	15 August 2002	19 days
17 September 2005	17 October 2005	31 days
8 November 2008	19 November 2008	11 days
20 September 2014	5 October 2015	15 days

Source: NZ Electoral Commission, author's own calculation

Table 2. New Zealand Governments from 1996-2014

	Coalition**	Seat of largest Party	Margin	Oversize
1996	NAT-NZF	44	1	No
1999	LAB-Alliance	49	6	No
2002	LAB-PROG-Green-UF	52	11*	Yes
2005	LAB-PROG NZF-UF (Green)	50	7*	Yes
2008	NAT-ACT-UF-MAO	58	9*	Yes
2011	NAT-ACT-UF-MAO	59	4*	Yes
2014	NAT-ACT-UF-MAO	60	4*	Yes

*some parties are technically in the coalition cabinet but are in formal confidence and supply agreement with the coalition government
**NZ parliamentary parties since 1996 are National (NAT), Labour (LAB), Greens, New Zealand First (NZF), United Future (UF), Progressives (PROG), Alliance, Maori (MAO), and ACT.

Source: NZ Electoral Commission; authors own calculation

Table 3. Voter Perception of Number of Parties

	Percent of respondents
Too many parties	47.2
About the right number	38.5
Not enough parties	2.0
Don't know	12.3

Source: New Zealand Election Studies 2011.

Table 4. Voter Perception of Number of Parties and Type of Government

	Single Party	Coalition	Don't know
Too many parties	68.8	37.4	35.7
About right	23.4	51.0	15.2
Not enough	0.3	2.4	4.5
Don't know	7.5	9.3	44.7

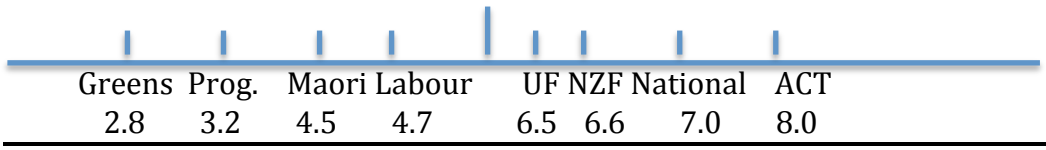
Source: New Zealand Election Studies 2011

Table 5. Parliamentary Parties and Effective Number of Parties

	# of parties	ENPP
1996	6	3.76
1999	7	3.45
2002	7	3.76
2005	8	2.95
2008	7	2.78
2011	8	2.98

Source: New Zealand Electoral Commission; Shugart and Tan (2016 forthcoming)

Figure 1. Approximation of Ideological Positions of New Zealand Parties



Note: The ideological scores are average placement score given by party experts on a 1-10 scale.
Source: Edwards 2009

Table 6. Ideological Orientation of NZ Parliaments, 1993-2014

	Weighted Ideological Orientation
1993	5.86*
1996	5.83
1999	5.59
2002	5.66
2005	5.72
2008	5.77
2011	5.78
2014	5.83

*Election under FPP rule.
Source: New Zealand Electoral Commission; author's own calculation

Table 7. Belief in Electoral System Fairness

"A good electoral system ensures party with most votes gets most MPs"

	Percent
Strongly agree	20.4
Agree	57.2
Neither	6.8
Disagree	1.6
Strongly disagree	0.2
Don't know	9.7

N=2475

Source: New Zealand Election Studies 2011

Table 8. Preferred Government Type and Referendum Vote

	Single Party	Coalition	Don't know
For MMP	16.5	63.1	36.3
Against MMP	69.8	25.1	16.9
Did not vote	13.7	11.8	46.8

Source: New Zealand Election Studies 2011

Table 9. Proportionality and Referendum Vote

	More than half	Same percentage	Did not vote
For MMP	22.9	63.5	45.3
Against MMP	64.8	23.7	20.3
Did not vote	12.4	12.9	34.3

Source: New Zealand Election Study 2011

Table X. Preferred Government Type (by ethnic groups and gender)

	Single Party	Coalition	Don't know
European	33.3	58.3	8.4
Maori	15.1	67.0	17.9
Pasifika	29.2	44.6	26.2
Asian	36.2	47.4	16.4
Male	35.7	56.9	7.3
Female	28.1	59.3	12.6

Source: New Zealand Election Studies 2011

Table X. Party Vote and Referendum Vote

	LAB	NAT	GRN	NZF	ACT	UF	MAORI
For MMP	68.9	35.4	82.5	60.0	5.0	50.0	70
Against MMP	28.3	62.0	16.6	36.2	85.0	50.0	26.7
Did not vote	2.8	1.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	3.3

Source: New Zealand Election Studies 2011